

Summer 2011

An Insect Bonanza

FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

With Japanese beetles in the west, plant bugs to the east and bollworms from the south, 2011 is shaping up to be a big year for insect pests in Arkansas, according to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

Gus Lorenz, extension entomologist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said the number of moths trapped in Lonoke could indicate a big year for bollworms.

for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. The reports on beetles have been on the increase since Monday. "Beetles have been bad in the River Valley for the last two or three years and we kind of expect it this time of year."

The beetles "are ferocious eaters," she said. "They love roses, they love cherries, plums, peaches, crape myrtles, Japanese maples. In the garden, they get into beans and sometimes they'll go over to tomatoes. They're not picky."

Buchanan said the beetles survive the winter

A demonstration of sweeping, a technique for scouting insect problems in crops.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture file photo



"In early May, traps averaged almost 60 moths per week and have been steadily rising ever since," he said Wednesday. "In late May, moth traps jumped from an average of 77 moths per trap to a whopping 339 moths per trap."

"Since the first of June, counts have steadily increased to 441 moths per trap this past week," Lorenz said. "I think this indicates all the southerly flow of wind has resulted in mass migration from points south, including Louisiana, Texas, Mexico and the Caribbean."

Dry, hot weather has been ideal for a big crop of plant bugs, a bane to both cotton growers.

Sweeping crop and bordering weed areas, entomologists found very high plant bug populations. In cotton fields bordering corn, plant bug counts went from just a few plant bugs per 100 sweeps last week, to as high as 60 plant bugs per 100 sweeps this week. Recommendations call for action against plant bugs when they reach 9-12 bugs per 100 sweeps. Sweeps are performed using a large finely meshed net that's swung in and out of crop rows.

As Arkansas' corn crop begins to tassel and silk, "adult plant bugs are alternating between corn and cotton fields," Lorenz said. "When corn tasseling and silk emergence coincides with cotton squaring, it creates the perfect storm for plant bug problems."

Cotton squares are unopened cotton flowers.

In western Arkansas, "the calls are flooding in about Japanese beetles," said Michelle Buchanan, Crawford County extension agent

as grubs and the best way to control beetles is to catch them in the grub stage, but by summer it's too late.

Many people prefer traps to insecticides to control adult beetles, but Buchanan advises careful placement.

"Put them on the perimeter of your yard," she said. Because they contain a lure, "if you put them in your garden, you could be attracting your neighbor's beetle problem into your own."

Berni Kurz, Washington County extension staff chair for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, said Fayetteville was the center of an outbreak dating back to the 1990s.

"Fayetteville and Springdale have seen the worst," he said. "Today, natural predator populations have increased so we don't see the numbers we saw just a couple of years ago. Outlying areas such as Elkins and Lincoln saw large numbers last year and I anticipate they will see large numbers for several years until natural predator numbers increase as well."

It's believed the Arkansas River Valley populations that Buchanan's clientele are battling probably hitchhiked with produce from NW Arkansas, Kurz said.

In the northeastern U.S., "they don't even talk about Japanese beetles anymore ... because of natural predators keeping the population in check."

Japanese beetles were first found in New Jersey near the end of the World War I. Δ